

**LIBERIA.**

**The Inaugural Address of President Roye—**  
The following inaugural address of Hon. Edward James Roye, fifth President of the Republic of Liberia, in West Africa, was delivered before the Legislature in joint convention at Monrovia, on the 3d of January, 1870. As it has never before been published in this country, it will be read with interest.

Mr. Roye, who is of pure African blood, was born at Newark, Ohio, February 3, 1815. He was educated at the Ohio University, at Athens, Ohio, and at Oberlin College, Ohio. He taught school in Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1836, engaged in business at Terre Haute, Ind., 1838-44, and removed to Liberia in 1845, where he has since resided. He is estimated to be worth more than two hundred thousand dollars. He has been Speaker of the House of Representatives, a member of the Senate, and also Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia. He is a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church. With enlightened and patriotic views and purposes, he enters upon his administration asking "an earnest interest in the prayers" of the good and pious of his own country and of other lands.

**Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives, Friends, and Fellow-Citizens:**—Called by your suffrage to the responsible position of President of the Republic of Liberia, I have just taken the oath and obligation which the Constitution prescribes on the induction of the Chief Magistrate. I have taken the oath with mental reservation, fully determined to discharge all the duties it involves to the best of my feeble judgment. The great constitution above all constitutions is God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift: therefore before undertaking this important work, it is a privileged Christian duty to invoke the Divine guidance and blessing upon everything which we, as legislators and Executive, shall be required to do in behalf of Liberia and Africa. To this end we devoutly ask an earnest interest in the prayers not only of the good and pious of our own country, but also of those of other lands who sincerely love and bless Africa may have sincere Christian friends.

The Providence of God indicates His will. He has assigned you seats in this honorable body; but those seats can be made truly honorable only by the faithful and efficient manner in which you discharge your duties to your constituents and to the nation generally. And permit me to add that you will prove true men only according as you acquit yourselves for the good of your race and country, and no further. And should you not prove true, it is my firm belief that God in some way will remove you to make room for others.

I believe that the object of our residence on this coast is to bear some humble part in bringing about the fulfillment of that cheering prophecy that Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God. Who among us will prove recreant to a trust of such magnitude, and involving such important consequences?

Some of us would not consent to hold any office within the gift of the people, if the emolument and honors were the only inducement. Riches and honors heaped up for ourselves, in the midst of poor and ignominious masses around, whose wretched condition can be relieved by directing public affairs aright, are too insignificant to admit either of consideration or comparison in this connection.

I am free to confess that if, under the guidance of Divine Providence, and with the cooperation of the Legislature and the people, I could effect no good, no improvement in the condition of Liberia, exerting benign influences upon the tribes by which we are surrounded, and ultimately upon Africa generally, and maintaining a good understanding with all nations—I would much prefer the retirement of private life. For the interest of Christian foreigners in God's cause of Africa's regeneration is so great, that they will vie with us in promoting it. But for this humble, yet pious confidence, I would not think of accepting an office of such grave responsibilities in their inevitable consequences and onerous duties to be performed, involving the unremitting exercise of the powers of the body and the mind. In the exercise of the latter, I may often err—since "it is human to err"; yet it shall not be an error of the heart, but of the head. Over errors arising from the head, if or when such should unfortunately occur, I pray God to incline you to throw the veil of Christian charity.

Neither the time, nor the manner, nor the circumstance in which Ethiopia is to stretch forth her hands unto God, is declared. But I believe that Liberia is called to engage in the initiatory steps to bring about this glorious result.

In substance, I have asked, if you Liberians would not try, under God, to be the humble but efficient initiators of this great work for God and man. But a strong will, which is indispensable, must precede, and have and continue to exercise a moulding influence upon the character, beginning, progress, and completion of the great work sought as an end.

The manner in which agencies are to proceed is not indicated in the Bible. But it is fair to presume that the teeming millions of this peninsula are to be regenerated chiefly through indigenous agencies, yet those of an exotic kind are to have a share in furnishing. Wherever God's will concerning Africa is known, in or out of it, and religiously felt to be a duty, there are men of general intelligence and means that will respond to the call. The wise and good of every nation invite us to redeem our race from the untold miseries of a protracted African night. They call us, on the one hand, boldly to undertake the work, and on the other we are urged to exertion by the old calamities against the negro.

The low estimate at which the negro has been rated is, in my opinion, a strong motive power, the true incentive to propel us on the path of duty to serve the best interests of the people, the country, the day and generation in which our lot is cast. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth;" from which we must infer that, if there be not one common destiny, the fault must be traced to dereliction or deficiency in the creature, as a free agent, and not to the Creator. The very unenviable notoriety given to the negro by those living upon the unrequited fruits of his labor, who robbed him of mental culture, of right views of himself, in relation to his God and his fellow-men, obscured his prospects as to all those things which they were interested in withholding from him.

It is our duty to prove that the mental and other disabilities under which the negro labors as a result of his servile antecedents are not inherent, as our adversaries would say, but

that they are solely the result of circumstances to be altogether removed when those circumstances are altered, or their influence counteracted.

Do you need to be reminded that the removal of all those most odious and damaging epithets applied to us by our enemies naturally devolves upon those who are the most injured by them? If we assiduously devote ourselves to this work of reconstructing the reputation of the race by successfully prosecuting the work before us in this land, it need not hereafter be told us, as if pointing out a new fact, that if we remain poor in a country rich by nature in the profusion of its productions, it must be a great dishonor.

It can never be sufficient for a few to be extraordinary exceptions to the race, for the acquisition of the arts and sciences, general intelligence, wealth, or any other distinction. But it should rather be an exception that a few should be found who had not so distinguished themselves.

This peninsula, as I have stated, is to be absolved from the disabilities of past ages mainly by those whom God has identified with it as its original inhabitants. For this cause, God, perhaps permitted the cruel slavery in foreign lands of our forefathers, that we might return as the missionaries of a Christian civilization.

We have been a poor people, from the combination of a number of causes operating against us, traceable to our insipid antecedents, which had been intensified by sordidly human agencies during the prolonged reign of unchecked wickedness in past times.

Still it becomes us to bear in mind that the masses of mankind make no allowance for the disabilities under which we have labored, and still do labor more or less, and which keep us back in a rich country. Nature, without the assistance of art, has made our country an acknowledged garden spot, which garden the exactions of the judgment, if there be no means demand that, if we be not inferior as a race, we shall improve to a paradise by labor, and by the application of the arts and sciences. We must find wherewithal to lay the foundation of an abiding negro republic, whose perpetuity shall be guaranteed by the general education and intelligence of the people. For nations, like individuals, cannot succeed to any great distinction, unless industry, perseverance, and straightforwardness towards all with whom, without distinction, they shall chance to deal, be permanently established prerequisites and active principles.

We must adhere to the binding requirements of the Constitution; but such laws should be enacted from time to time in the progress of our development as shall encourage and invite foreign capitalists to make investments in the country.

**FINANCES.**  
A very important policy which it will be the earnest effort of the administration to carry out relates to the regulation of the finances. We must guard against a recurrence of an insufficiency of income to meet the expenses of the State, for where this is so frequent as to establish a large annual average against the republic, it is certain to lead to serious consequences. Our real danger lies not in the actual amount of debt, contracted as it has been thus far among our own people, but in the rate of increase. If there be no probability that the increase will cease, there can be no security against ultimate, perhaps early, bankruptcy. The customs duties, our chief source of revenue, are dependent for their augmentation upon an increase of the consuming power of the people. Advance in this branch of the revenue will depend upon the improvement of the people, native and Liberian, and upon those additional facilities for the interchange of commodities in the interior of which we shall soon speak.

We must have a sound par value currency. Import and export duties should be paid in the old currency and in gold and silver coin. The old currency should be taken out of the hands of the people, if they will consent to take "greenbacks" for it at a par exchange, upon the authority of a law which you may think proper to pass; the holders of the said currency making known the amounts they severally possess. The aggregate amount of it is supposed to be between fifty and sixty thousand dollars. This proposition carried out will considerably relieve the depressed condition of our currency. I have no doubt that the sum required for the aforesaid redemption in "greenbacks" can be secured upon a loan of six per cent., paying the interest in gold, and the principal in a given time to be settled by authority of an act of the Legislature. If we pray, nothing doubting, and exert ourselves, the money will come from somewhere, either in "greenbacks" or gold.

**LABOR.**  
Know ye, friends, that the source of all earthly riches is labor. When intelligently and constantly pursued, whether by farmers, mechanics, common laborers, doctors, lawyers, scientific men, or men of literary or mercantile pursuits, a proper industry will not fail to produce a good living, if not substantial fortunes. The dignity of labor, then, is the means by which good faith in all our transactions can be most nobly sustained; and it cannot generally be national, unless it be common in the case of every man, woman, boy, and girl able to work. The ease and comfortable circumstances which will speedily accrue to those laborers in a country rich by nature like ours will soon drive all the drones out of the national beehive. If we can more fully organize, not to say inaugurate, a system of labor, our general prosperity must and will be sure. We shall always have a par value currency. I have promised that the fifty or sixty thousand dollars of our old currency shall be, at least, on a par with American "greenbacks," and, further, it shall remain so. So soon as a little time shall have elapsed, this state of things can be brought into being. As I have remarked, the work which is to be accomplished for the general prosperity of the country, the virtue of the people, and the honor of the race, is truly great and arduous. And notwithstanding on my part a naturally awakened diffidence is felt in the ability to secure the ultimate ends had in view, yet this diffidence is somewhat mitigated by the recollection of the true saying, which I must repeat here, that "where there is a will there is a way." In the exercise of this will, I am sure you feel to join and participate; and thus united and untiring efforts will be put forth to give to our own countrymen and the world the fruits of a prosperous and happy home. I now come to consider another very important item in the policy of the administration upon which we are entering. The work which we propose may appear arduous. I believe it is; but it is my conviction that it is practicable; and "where there is a will there is a way."

**RAILROADS.**  
In a country like ours, destitute of large navigable rivers, or canals penetrating the interior, where indigenous and spontaneous

wealth covers the ground, the necessity of railroads must be an axiomatic truth. I believe that the erection of a railroad will have a wonderful influence in the civilization and elevation of the native tribes. The barriers of heathenism and superstition will disappear before the railroad and its concomitants, as frost, snow, and ice dissolve before a summer's sun. This is one of the most efficient means by which God's promise made concerning Africa is, in my opinion, to be fulfilled.

I do not deem it necessary to demonstrate to you the utility of railroads. We have numerous examples of their beneficial effects all over the civilized world. And we should endeavor to follow such examples as far as they can be adopted, in our circumstances, to promote intercourse between distant portions of the country, and to facilitate the interchange of commodities, commercial rarities, and indigenous productions, between Liberia and foreign countries. The surest and quickest, as well as the most permanent and profitable plan to evangelize and civilize Africa, is first to invite intercourse with the inhabitants, through their natural instincts, which are always alive to the utility of railroads. We have numerous examples of their beneficial effects all over the civilized world. 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